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Introduction to the Special Issue on School Counselor Preparation and Supervision

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Introduction to the Special Issue on School Counselor Preparation and Supervision

Keywords

school counselor preparation; school counselor supervision

As co-editors, we are excited to introduce seven meaningful conceptual and research manuscripts in the *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision's* first special issue on school counselor preparation and supervision. These articles focus on three overarching themes: pre-service preparation and learning, ethical decision making practice, and counseling developmentally, culturally and linguistically diverse students. The authors of these articles present salient issues affecting the preparation and supervision of the 21st century school counselor.

Pre-service Preparation and Learning

The opening article in this special issue draws readers' attention to how counselor educators can facilitate learning opportunities for school counseling students by initiating collaborative relationships between students in school counseling and educational leadership programs. DeSimone and Roberts report the results of a mixed-methods pilot study in which they used internship sites shared by school counseling and educational leadership students to analyze three important categories of perception data: (1) aspiring principals' perceptions of school counselor utilization; (2) aspiring school counselors' beliefs about barriers that hinder implementation of comprehensive school counseling activities; and, (3) aspiring school counselors' and principals' beliefs about the value of joint learning experiences. The results of the pilot study highlight how perceptions influence the practice of these two important groups of school leaders. The authors found several factors influenced school counselor and principal practice that included time constraints, negative school culture, and poor principal-counselor relationships among the 105 participants. Recommendations for how school counselor educators can cultivate relationships between educational leadership and school counseling students prior to graduation are offered.

Through a thematic analysis of student work artifacts (i.e., weekly journals, small group reflections in class, and post-class surveys), Havlik, Bialka, and Schneider provide insight about incorporating service learning into an introductory school counseling course. Service learning is a method of instruction that engages students in volunteerism and reflection while fostering elements of advocacy and professional identity. The authors offer a rationale and practical suggestions for designing the service-learning activity, aligning the activity with overall course goals, and integrating the activity into the course. The authors also share a summary of student feedback that illustrates the utility of self-reflection, students' increased self-awareness, and a heightened knowledge and sensitivity to social injustices affecting today's youth.

Ethical Decision Making Practice

Ethics and ethical decision making remain an ever-present topic for school counselors. Gilbride, Goodrich, and Luke report the results of a landmark study in which they investigated the professional peer membership of school counselors and examine what resources they utilize most frequently when confronting ethical dilemmas. The authors' work illustrates the complexity of school counselors identifying a professional peer group because of their multiple, and sometimes competing roles within schools and districts. This article makes an important contribution to the knowledge base because it provides readers a richer and more accurate sense of the school counseling profession's demographic diversity. Furthermore, it illustrates how school counselors' varying roles are inherent with dilemmas requiring they employ a wide range of resources to make ethical decisions.

Next, Springer offers readers an ethical case study that illuminates how school counselors are challenged to strike the balance of ethical obligations and professional boundaries. Communicated through the lens of an untenured elementary school counselor, the article

provides insight into the multifaceted and complex roles 21st century school counselors fulfill. The issues presented in case highlight the need for more education and research on ethical decision-making, advocacy on various levels, and the awareness of informed consent in practice.

Working with Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Diverse Students

Effective school counseling practice requires attention to the developmental, cultural, and linguistic needs of students. Schwartz's article provides readers with developmental considerations for early adolescent students' capacity to make meaning of their experiences. Schwartz reports the results of a qualitative study that sampled middle school counselors – via individual and focus group interviews – to better understand how school counselors support healthy meaning making of life experiences among middle school students. Schwartz found school counselors help students in identity exploration when students confront challenging life situations by encouraging reflection and acknowledging their important connections and relationships.

As the K-12 student population continues to increase in ethnic and racial diversity, school counselors must understand the unique needs of youth that experience systemic barriers. Storlie and Toomey present the results of a qualitative study of school counselors' perceptions of barriers when working with Latino youth in order to inform more socially-just preparation and practice among school counselor trainees. The authors highlight barriers that Latino youth currently face and provide recommendations for school counselors to enhance the academic, career, and personal/social development of this growing population.

Lastly, Hannon offers a critical review of the literature on urban school counselors' professional development needs and provides a rationale for more research that investigates their

professional development and supervision needs. The review cites the imbalance between ample research informing school counselor educators to help prepare urban school counselors versus the limited research about their ongoing supervision and professional development needs.

It is paramount counselor educators continue to give thoughtful consideration to school counselor preparation and supervision. Such consideration has the potential to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for pre-service school counselors, thereby preparing them to be successful in the age of school accountability. Through this special issue, professional school counselors, counselor educators and school counseling students can build their knowledge related to pre-service preparation and learning, ethical decision making practice, and working with diverse students. It is our hope that continued interest in school counselor preparation and supervision remains a priority for our readers and for the counseling profession.